

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY

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In the Matter of:

"FIRE ON BOARD M/V COLUMBIA"

Date of Fire June 6, 2000
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Docket No.:
DCA00MM030

Statement of Facts from:

CAPTAIN THOMAS R. REED

Master of M/V TAKU

Statement of Facts Dated: June 12, 2000

Sent via: Jeffery B. Hurst
Safety Officer
Alaska Marine Highway System

Via: CAPTAIN NORM EDWARDS
Vessel Operations Manager

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Alaska Marine Highway System

3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, AK 99801-7898
Office: (907) 465-8815
Fax: (907) 465-2474
Cell: (907) 321-0286

E-mail: norman.edwards@dot.state.ak.us

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Transcribed from Letter to Electronic Format By:

Anthony Murray
Operations Group Chairman

1 FROM: Thomas R. Reed, Master, M/V TAKU

2 ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

3 SUBJECT: Columbia Incident

4 Dear Sir(s)

5 In response to your letter (12-June-00), request for
6 additional information the following data is provided:

7 1. Thomas R. Reed

8 2. Master----On Bridge-In command

9 3a. Two Master's Licenses, Second Mate Ocean,
10 First Class Pilot. (see copy)

11 3b. Training-Kings Point, U.S. Merchant Marine
12 Academy-3 ½ yrs.

13 A.B. & Bos'n-9 ½ yrs.

14 3rd. & 2nd. Mate - 5yrs

15 Chief Mate - 9yrs

16 Master - 2yrs

17 3c. Fire fighting at:

18 1. Bayoun, N.Y.

19 2. Treasure Island,
20 Calif.

21 3. North Bend, Wash.

22 3d. Safety Training:

23 1. All HCT manuals

24 2. Responsibility as
25 Bos'n & Chief Mate to directly

1 supervise Safety matters.

2 3. Master,

3 responsibility for Safety of Ships,

4 Safety meetings, etc.

5 3e. Miscellaneous:

6 I have a multitude of certificates and
7 endorsements in the Maritime industry.

8 4. I have been either going to school or working in
9 the industry for over 30 years since 1969.—School at
10 Kings Point (U.S. Merchant Marine Academy), N.O.A.A.
11 (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration), and
12 Alaska Marine Highway System.

13 5. Reported for work on 23-May-00 at about 1400.

14 6. Work Schedule for the two days prior to the
15 incident.

16 Departed Prince Rupert 1730—Remained on the Bridge for
17 about 30 minutes, until George Roc Buoy—ate dinner,—
18 Did some paper work until about 2130—rested until about
19 2230—on bridge for approach to Ketchikan.

20 Departed Ketchikan 0045 5-June-00—on bridge for about
21 30 minutes. 0200 went to bed. ---Woke up at about
22 0700 ---worked on ISM audit ---on bridge at about 0945
23 for arrival to Wrangell.

24 Departed Petersburg 1446 ---on bridge until about 1510.
25 ---More paper Work until, ate dinner and rested until
26 about 1800 for approach to Kake.

1 Departed Kake 1948 on bridge until about 2015 -went to
2 bed.

3 Arrived Broad Island about 0100 6-June-00 (one hour
4 before Sergius Narrows) On bridge to Sitka. Arrived
5 Sitka about 0420--went to bed. Was awoken about 0645.

6 Departed Sitka 0704 ---On Bridge to Pavarotni Island
7 (about 30 minutes past Sergius Narrows. ---Paper work
8 (working on ISM audit)

9 1210 3rd Mate (Rodini I. Rolan) informs me that the
10 Columbia has problems.

11 7. Just prior to the incident I was involved in
12 Ship management paper work. Just after the incident I
13 was involved in organizing the paperwork fore
14 documenting the incident.

15 8. This is a more detailed chronology of the
16 events with the M/V Columbia than what was submitted to
17 the Port Captain.

18 1210 -3rd. Mate informed me of the M/V Columbia's
19 request for assistance. At that time I went to the
20 bridge to ascertain a more detailed analysis of the
21 situation and was informed that the Columbia has a fire
22 onboard. The look out informed me of seeing a large
23 amount of smoke arising from her stacks. At this time
24 the Columbia was North West of us about 6 miles in the
25 center of Chatham Straits off North Passage Point. I
26 directed the 3rd Mate to set a course for the Columbia

1 and gave orders to wake the Chief Mate (Thomas O.
2 Moore) 2nd Mate (Michael Montez) and inform the Chief
3 Engineer (James A. Jurgeleit).

4 I called the Columbia, let her know we were
5 on our way and asked what assistance the Taku could
6 give. I was informed the Columbia needed fire fighting
7 tanks and packs.

8 The Chief Mate came to the bridge and I
9 directed him to wake the off watch, get the equipment
10 the Columbia needed and to prepare the Fast Rescue
11 Boat. The 2nd Mate assisted the Chief Mate.

12 1230 I took over control of the Taku from the
13 3rd Mate. And told the 3rd Mate to begin keeping a log
14 of the events as they transpired.

15 On the approach to the Columbia I received a
16 call from the U.S.C.G. Ship Anacapa and was informed
17 that they were going to hold position off the
18 Columbia's port Quarter. I informed them and the
19 Columbia that the Taku would hold a position off the
20 Columbia's starboard side.

21 1245 Taku came to a position 0.2 miles south
22 of the Columbia (57deg, 51.0' North, 134deg. 48.8'
23 West). The weather at this time was light SE winds
24 (less than 5 knt.) calm seas, cloudy sky and 10 miles
25 visibility.

26 I received a call from the U.S.C.G. Ship

1 Anacapa and was informed that they were in the process
2 of launching their first rescue boat and would assist
3 in the transfer of the tanks and packs. With this
4 agreed upon their fast rescue boat came along side and
5 the equipment was lowered into their boat through the
6 port car deck door.

7 1300 Our Fast rescue boat was lowered and
8 more tanks and packs were transferred to the Columbia.

9 The second mate readied some of our deck
10 force for fire fighting in case the Columbia needed
11 more men to fight the fire.

12 The Columbia informed me that their radars
13 were not functioning and therefore were requesting a
14 position fix. Their latitude was relayed to them by the
15 3rd Mate. I directed the 3rd Mate to acquire a position
16 fix every 15 minutes.

17 1345 The Master of the Columbia called and we
18 discussed the option of marrying the two ships together
19 for the evacuation of the passengers. Given the wind
20 and sea conditions I felt that this was by far the
21 safest approach to evacuating the passengers. We agreed
22 upon tying up the Taku's starboard side to the
23 Columbia's port side. The only problem foreseen was
24 weather the two sponsons would match up.

25 I considered the stability problem of taking
26 aboard an excess of 500 persons as designated by our

1 C.O.I. but felt no danger existed. We had only 40
2 vehicles aboard and had left Sitka with a Mean draft of
3 16'00". The excess number of passengers would not have
4 exceeded our weight limit of 222.2 lg. Tons and our
5 draft limit of 16"09".

6 I had the 3rd mate inform the pursers
7 department of our intentions to take on about 436
8 passengers from the Columbia and that a count would be
9 needed.

10 The 2nd Mate readied the deck force to tie up
11 along side.

12 I brought the Taku around to the stern of the
13 Columbia and when the Columbia informed me that they
14 were ready, I brought the Taku along side. The Sponsons
15 matched perfectly. The only problem encountered was
16 that the Taku stern line lead fwd to the Columbia and
17 this drew the Taku too far fwd when married together. I
18 had a second line leading aft from the Taku to the
19 Columbia and this rectified the problem. The two doors
20 matched and the decks were even.

21 1406 we were fast along side. Plywood boards
22 were placed between the two decks with safety lines to
23 assist the passage of passengers. At first the transfer
24 appeared to be moving slowly. I requested an
25 explanation and was informed that the physically
26 impaired and elderly required extra time to transfer

1 the staircase. The Taku food service line was opened to
2 the passengers and rooms were set aside for those in
3 need of a bed.

4 The fast rescue boat was stationed in close
5 between the two bows for immediate rescue if needed.

6 While along side the Columbia Master, George
7 Brereton, and I discussed the possibility of towing
8 the Columbia back into the center of the Chatham
9 Straits. The Columbia was experiencing a drift of about
10 a knot in an East-Southeast direction. Towing the
11 Columbia to the center of the strait would keep her out
12 of danger until the tugs arrived. I informed the 2'nd
13 mate of our decision to tow her and I directed him to
14 make ready to receive the Columbia's bow lines once we
15 let go.

16 1536 after receiving the Columbia's
17 passengers the Taku let go and moved to a position just
18 fwd of the Columbia's bow. I then backed the Taku close
19 enough to receive heaving lines and to have two of
20 Columbia's bow lines brought in and hooked to our bits.

21 1550 The Columbia was under tow and were
22 easing her to the center of Chatham strait when I
23 received word from my chief Purser (Victoria James) of
24 a heart attack victim (Judd Cranston) and the need for
25 a medivac. I consulted a doctor on board who was with
26 her and he verified that this needed immediate

1 priority. I informed the U.S.C.G. helicopter of the
2 situation and made arrangements to let go the Columbia
3 and receive the helicopter.

4 The Master of the Columbia and I agreed that
5 the Columbia would alter course to starboard. This
6 would eliminate any possibility of the two ships
7 colliding.

8 The fast rescue boat was sent to the Columbia
9 to borrow medical equipment because we had three
10 persons with possible medical problems.

11 I directed the 2'nd Mate to vacate the
12 solarium and outer decks and prepare to receive the
13 USCG helicopter 6011 that was standing by at this time.
14 The Coast Guard informed me that they wanted to lower a
15 man to the deck to assist in the transfer.

16 1605 Let go the Columbia, altered course to
17 starboard and when I was sure the Columbia was no
18 problem then I set a course for 250 degrees placing the
19 wind on my port bow. Taku received Coast Guard man and
20 Mr. Judd Cranston was readied for evacuation.

21 1618 Judd Cranston was medivaced off the Taku
22 and the Taku readied to receive the fast rescue boat. I
23 was informed that we had a possible second medivac so I
24 contacted the helicopter and asked them if they could
25 wait. I contacted the Purser and was informed that a
26 second medivac was not necessary so I sent the

1 helicopter on its way.

2 Two other passengers were having medical
3 problems:

4 a. Micheall Rago—Acute Asthma, long
5 medical history, recently recovering
6 from pneumonia,

7 b. Jim Sackett—Angina, complex medical
8 history, hypertension, Diabetes,
9 Arterial Fibrillation.

10 1630 retrieved fast rescue boat and medical
11 supplies.

12 1640 M/V Taku departs for Auke Bay with 436
13 Columbia Passengers, 6 Columbia crewmembers (to assist
14 with the large amounts of passengers), 2 medical
15 assistance from the Anacapa, 81 Taku passengers and the
16 Taku crew.

17 J.C.O. Emergency Team was informed (via cell-
18 phone) of an ETA at Auke Bay of 1945.

19 9. This was explained in question #8.

20 10. I left the Taku at the end of my regular
21 work week(s) on 8-June-2000, at about
22 1530.

23 11. I am of the opinion that the Crews of the
24 Columbia and Taku did an outstanding job
25 in their response to the situation. We
26 were dealing with non-normal situations,

1 each of which carried with it major
2 potential hazards. Due to their calmness,
3 initiative, persistence, and courtesy; no
4 major problems occurred. The
5 professionalism of these crew members
6 should be recognized and duly noted by the
7 powers to be.

8
9 (END OF MASTER OF THE M/V TAKU STATEMENT)

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